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News Release

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Two Minneapolis men indicted on child pornography charges

The crime of child pornography is a growing concern, and two men residing in Minneapolis were recently charged in separate federal indictments on charges of manufacturing and possessing child pornography, respectively.

Refugio Gadea Pliego, a 29-year-old illegal alien living in Minneapolis, was indicted Oct. 30 by a federal grand jury in Minneapolis on one count of manufacturing child pornography, and Robert Carl Johnson, 50, Minneapolis, was indicted Nov. 7 with two counts of child pornography possession.

Pliego's indictment alleges that he produced visual depictions of sexual activity with a minor sometime between 2006 and 2007.

Police uncovered the child pornography during the execution of a search warrant of Pliego's apartment, according to the criminal complaint filed in Hennepin County. During the search, police found a video tape of Pliego engaged in a sex act with a 14-year-old boy.

If convicted, Pliego faces a potential maximum penalty of 30 years in federal prison. All sentences are determined by a federal district court judge. This case is the result of an investigation by the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Tracy L. Perzel.

Johnson's indictment alleges that he knowingly possessed one or more matters which contained visual depictions of minors engaging in sexually explicit conduct on his computers, hard drives and compact discs on June 29, 2006. These images were transported from several states, including Illinois, Iowa and Washington.

Johnson faces a potential maximum penalty of 20 years in federal prison on each count. All sentences are determined by a federal district court judge. This case is the result of an investigation by the Minnesota Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, a law enforcement body comprised of investigators from throughout the state. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael A. Dees.

Both of these cases are part of Project Safe Childhood (PSC), a national initiative that encourages the use of multi-jurisdictional task forces to investigate and prosecute cases that involve the sexual exploitation of children over the Internet. PSC urges that law enforcement efforts be complemented by community-wide campaigns to assist victims of exploitation and to educate parents, other adults, and children about Internet safety.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, one in 33 children receives an unwanted sexual solicitation online each year. One in four children experiences unwanted exposure to sexually explicit material on the Internet each year. And, more than 20,000 images of child pornography are posted on the Internet every week. Moreover, recent research conducted by the Federal Bureau of Prisons indicates a strong correlation between possessing or distributing child pornography and committing sexual-contact crimes against children.

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An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by the defendant. The defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.